

**FINDINGS:** Systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations continue in Iraq. Members of the country's smallest religious minorities still suffer from targeted violence, threats, and intimidation, against which they receive insufficient government protection. Perpetrators of such attacks are rarely identified, investigated, or punished, creating a climate of impunity. The small communities also experience a pattern of official discrimination, marginalization, and neglect. In addition, there continue to be sectarian attacks, often with impunity, and tense relations between Shi'a and Sunni Iraqis, and other egregious, religiously-motivated violence also continues.

Based on these concerns, USCIRF again recommends in 2010 that Iraq be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC.\* The Commission recommended that Iraq be designated as a CPC in 2008 and 2009, and placed Iraq on its Watch List in 2007.

The religious freedom situation in Iraq remains grave, particularly for the country's smallest, most vulnerable religious minorities. The violence, forced displacement, discrimination, marginalization, and neglect suffered by members of these groups threaten these ancient communities' very existence in Iraq. These minorities, which include Chaldo-Assyrians and other Christians, Sabeen Mandaeans, and Yazidis, continue to experience targeted violence, receive inadequate official protection or justice, and suffer discrimination. Since 2003, many have fled to neighboring countries, where they represent a disproportionately high percentage of registered Iraqi refugees. The diminished numbers remaining in the country are now concentrated in areas in the highly dangerous Nineveh governorate over which the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) is seeking to extend its control, and they suffer abuses and discrimination as a result. Although the Iraqi government has publicly condemned violence against these groups, it continues to fall short in investigating the continuing attacks and bringing perpetrators to justice, and its efforts to increase security to minority areas are not adequate. In addition, though greatly reduced from 2006-07 levels, violence between Shi'a and Sunni Iraqis continues. Significant tensions between these groups remain, including tensions due to the ongoing government formation process. Finally, other religiously-motivated violence and abuse continues.

**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:** For Iraq to become a secure, diverse, and stable democracy, the United States must pay greater attention to helping ensure that the human rights of all Iraqis are guaranteed and enforced both in law and practice. With U.S. forces drawing down and a new Iraqi government being formed in the wake of the March 7 elections, the United States should emphasize, with both the new Iraqi government and the KRG, the urgent need to protect vulnerable religious minority communities and ensure them justice. USCIRF also recommends that the U.S. government appoint a special envoy for human rights in Iraq, create an inter-agency task force on Iraqi minority issues, and prioritize funding for projects that foster religious tolerance. Additional recommendations for U.S. policy towards Iraq can be found in the 2010 Annual Report chapter on Iraq and by following this link: <http://www.uscifr.gov/images/ar2010/iraq2010.pdf>